1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
EZ6 Malta EZ6



wastelands and roadside verges are occasionally turned on to sulla fields and on to bastard fallow but that is all. This, too, is a necessary consequence of the pressure on land resources mentioned above: land is too precious to be used as pasture or even as true fallow *vaine pâture*. A consequent disadvantage is that, in the enforced absence of folding, dung is expensive and rarely applied.

Thirdly, much more than in other Mediterranean areas of dry farming, the Maltese cultivators are already alive to the necessity of raising cash crops which are also rotation crops, and are capable of choosing multi-purpose plants for catch-drop use. Broad beans, together with bread and *pasta*, form the basis of the countryman's diet but are also used as horse and mule fodder, depending on crop quality and ruling prices. Chickpeas similarly have alternative uses as dry fodder, green vegetables or coffee substitutes. Fodder crop improvement or change is therefore not simply a matter of elevating standards of primitive farming, but implies an agricultural revolution.

Given this situation, it would seem that there are only two reasonable methods of increasing fodder production in the near future, assuming that such an increase is desired. The first is that of devoting more scarce irrigated land to leguminous fodder production. From the economic point of view, any diversion of land now producing irrigated vegetables to forage growing would be of doubtful value. Malta, even now, is not self-supporting in vegetable crops such as tomatoes, and dietetically would probably benefit from an even greater consumption of green vegetables. Though a net exporter of potatoes and onions, Malta has to import unnecessarily large quantities of these same products. Moreover, as examined in connection with Vegetables and Fruit Crops (pp. 213-219), the use of irrigated land for fodder growing would debar the development of Malta's only possible large-scale exports - fruits and early specialised vegetables. The loss of such an important export possibility would weigh heavily against the gain in the production of fodder.

The second possibility is that of the replacement of the poor wheats and barleys by new hybrid sorghums. Here too there are difficulties. Though sorghums generally have low transpiration rates, their large leaf areas make them more dependent on subsoil water than the short, local barleys. On the other hand, they survive early droughts better than most grains. A second possible danger lies in our ignorance concerning their vulnerability to indigenous insect pests. The third difficulty is social. The poor barley lands on which sorghums might be grown, as indicated earlier, are those in which terrain makes it most necessary for continuous and arduous manual labour to be applied. It is precisely these areas, vulnerable to soil erosion, which are most likely to be neglected or abandoned by a society with rising living standards and demands. Nevertheless, here may lie both an easy and efficient way of improving and increasing fodder production without mortgaging the future of the best lands.

### *SULLA - HEDYSARIUM CORONARIUM L.*

Sulla, the most important fodder crop, is a perennial legume indigenous to the Mediterranean. The variety *Africa* or *Gaulitana*, erect, slightly branched and often growing 4 to 6 feet in height, is usually found, particularly in Gozo: the more prostrate and finer foliaged varieties such as *Diffusa* and *Prostrata* are more recently introduced and less common.

Matured seed is sown in late summer and it germinates after the first autumnal rains, flowering between March and May. It is then usually cut or pulled and either used as green fodder or, more commonly, sun-dried as hay. Little affected by pests and diseases, sulla develops luxuriant foliage and extensive root systems. It therefore provides good anti-erosion soil cover as well as possessing excellent powers of nitrogen fixation. Water requirements are lower than for any of the cultivated *Trifolium* or *Medicago* plants. In first flowering, its protein content is high, but some of the fodder quality is lost by the delaying of harvesting until the yield in volume is highest and also by poor storage. Much sulla is sold off the farm.

As Fig. 73 shows, the distribution of sulla in Malta corresponds in general with the distribution of cultivated land, but it is noticeably less important in

[Text Continues on p. 203]

In terms of the social pattern of the rural village, this means that there is a very significant distinction to be made between the older generation of farmers proper and the younger generation whose direct attachment to the land and farming is weaker if not already broken. If one turns to a consideration of the way of life and living standards in the village community this gulf is apparent. Most spectacular perhaps are changes in clothing.

The familiar working garb of the farmer has been the heavy woollen vest, cotton trousers, waistcoat, and cap. Recently, army-surplus shirts, denims, etc., have replaced the locally-made garment, often of home-grown cotton, while the cummerbund is now rare. Sandals are normally worn for walking but not for work. The farmer who works round the clock has never had a 'best suit'. He attends Mass in his working clothes before going to the fields and, on Sundays and holidays, ventures forth as on any other day with the possible addition of a woollen cardigan or more presentable waistcoat. For women, the use of the *faldetta* ribbed hood has declined rapidly in the last 20 years and is now only worn by the older women in the villages and by female members of the M.U.S.F.U.M. movement. The use of black generally by women is declining but most clothes are still made in the home even if from bought material rather than home-produced cotton or wool. The younger generation are not usually content to venture forth dressed in the manner of their parents but insist on making their own appearance as much like that of the average town-dweller among whom they aim to move socially. The white shirt, smart suit, shoes, socks, and well-oiled hair of the young men and the bright dresses, high-heeled shoes, nylons and cosmetics of the village maidens are regarded as the essential uniform of the seeker after the bright lights of Valletta and the towns. The schools have played a part in this with their demands on cleanliness, footwear and dress in the classroom. Occasionally a child goes bare-foot to a village school but no one would think of visiting Valletta shoe-less. The imitation of urban standards of dress is particularly apparent in the sub-urban districts where the farming minority are at pains to 'keep up with the Vellas' in dress - in spite of the expense involved.

Diet in the traditional rural scene depended upon what could be produced by the fields and animals held by any family. The standard soups and stews (such as *minestra* and *brodu*) were consequently largely vegetable. Meat was rarer, fish seasonal and small birds might be added to a stew depending on the results of the hunting or, more correctly, shooting which was and is a popular Sunday and Holiday pastime in the countryside. The diet was rather less 'Italian' than that in Valletta and the towns, with potatoes in place of the various forms of farinaceous paste - spaghetti, macaroni, etc. As in the rest of the Islands before the 1939-45 war, milk was taken fresh from goats and sheep and was not infrequently disease-carrying. Tinned milk is now popular in town and country but consumption of bottled, pasteurised milk is growing. Tea and coffee drinking have to some extent replaced local and home-made wines, especially in the many bars and small cafés which have become the leisure-time resorts of the men of the villages between strolls in the squares and streets. Even here change is evidenced, for the traditional guitar-accompanied *ghana* of the Maltese peasant has given way to *Radio e Televisione Italiana* as the basis of café entertainment.

This very increase in leisure time is significant. The old farmer is content to spend the greater part of every day with his animals or in the fields for they are in fact his hobby as well as his livelihood. Cinemas and bright lights hold no attraction for him; but the young man insists on recreation as he sees it in the towns. The timetable of the farmer varies according to his type of farming. The herdsmen's life is ruled by the routine of feeding and attention demanded by his cows or goats and by the times of milk collection demanded by the Milk Marketing Undertaking. All this means an earlier daily start (sometimes 1 or 2 a.m.) than is usual for the field worker who begins his day with a 4 a.m. or 5 a.m. Mass and then stops for a light breakfast some three hours later. Lunch-time is 11 a.m. or noon and is followed by a *siesta* of some hours, depending on the season and the pressure of work to be completed before the sun goes down and the field-worker shoulders his hoes or his wooden plough and returns home

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
EZ6 Malta EZ6



for the evening meal, Rosary, and sleep. Electricity has made his time-table only slightly less dependent on the times of the rising and setting sun.

Increased spending-power, a more varied diet now including a variety of preserved and non-local foods, and the replacement of home-produced cotton by purchased materials for making clothes, have all contributed to the extension of shopping facilities in the villages. Apart from the 'general store', specialised shops have also made their appearance - butchers, pharmacists, clothing shops, and so on. The 1938-45 war brought flour and bread rationing and the end of home-baking - hence a further village specialisation (see p. 182). Since the War, the number of vans touring the countryside every week has increased rapidly to bring a variety of wares to the door of even the most lonely farmhouse. The *petrolju* van was early in the field, for the rural Maltese have long relied on paraffin for both cooking and such heating as the houses receive. Yet another addition in recent years to the diet of the poorer classes has been the free distributions of food (cheese, rice, corn-meal and flour) made by C.A.R.E. and by Catholic Relief Services (cheese, beans, flour, etc.), another organisation distributing surplus United States food supplies abroad.

Village housing is changing more slowly. The traditional Maltese rural home was a flat-roofed dwelling built round an enclosed courtyard, from which a staircase frequently led to an upper floor. The courtyard was the centre of domestic life and much of the regular work of the household was done here. A door, large enough to take a cart, opened on to the street. Windows on outside walls were small and rare. In many of the older parts of the villages, accommodation for animals and stores adjoins the rooms occupied by the family, the whole forming a compact economic and domestic unit. Water was carried from a village pump and sanitation, if any, was limited to independent cess-pits requiring periodic emptying. In winter such premises were liable to be very cold; in the heat of summer the rough roads of beaten earth readily produced a fine dust which can only have had harmful effects on the widespread trachoma and similar ailments.

Nowadays much of this survives only in the memory of the older people. Only some village streets in Gozo are not now surfaced; mains sewerage has been extended to all the larger villages of Malta; electricity is absent only in north-western Gozo; familiar red telephone kiosks have appeared all over the Islands; the larger villages in Malta have cinemas, in addition to much older Band Club buildings.

The essential features of the village society within which the Maltese farmer lives today may be summarised thus in conclusion:-

Economically, there has been a change from the independent, subsistent family unit to a diversified and inter-dependent occupational structure in the village, along with a realisation of the impossibility of maintaining Maltese agriculture in its traditional form without 'artificial' support. Materially, the village is seen to have benefited from a wide range of developments which have improved it as a place in which to live for the Maltese countryman with his now greater range of demands - and the buying-power with which to achieve them, thanks to war-time siege and subsequently to Government subsidy and guarantee. Socially, literacy and the awareness of a different way of life beyond the village have brought to the younger generation an intense dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction not only with the social regime of the village, even in its present broadened and functionally diversified form, but also with the farming on which the community has depended.

Thus farming in its present form is waning and the Maltese farmer as he was in the recent past - and still is among the older generation - is a disappearing individual. If the clash between the present younger generation and the old order can be resolved and if the retreat from the land can be stemmed at all, a different kind of agriculture will emerge with a new type of farmer and a changed rural society.

REFERENCES

1. Census of the Maltese Islands 1948. Table 53.
2. C.A.R.E. - Co-operative for American Remittances to Everywhere.

Note: For a fuller consideration see R. W. Boxley: 'The Individual and Changing Rural Society in Malta'; Ph.D. Thesis, Durham, 1960.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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241 433 464 [178] giant dockyard in Cospicua, or for one of the various British Service departments scattered over the island. Gozo is more dependent upon agriculture, but many Gozitan men work in Malta, returning to their families for the weekend. Though Maltese villages are populated mostly by industrial workers, they have nonetheless a decidedly rural atmosphere about them, for their inhabitants still have links with the agricultural economy of the past. Many retain a patch or two of land which they plant with potatoes or some other cash crop to supplement their wages, and virtually all keep chickens and rabbits to supply them with eggs and fresh meat for special celebrations.

[231] [235] [262]

463 TABLE 1. Occupational Classes in Farrug and Kortin[1]
(Expressed as percentages of the total male working population)

| *Occupational Class* | *Farrug* | *Kortin* | *Islands* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Professional and Clerical | 4 | 7 | 15 |
| Service and Skilled | 39 | 52 | 55 |
| Semi- and Unskilled | 42 | 27 | 20 |
| Agricultural | 15 | 14 | 10 |
| Totals | 100 | 100 | 100 |

[438] A hundred years ago, the inhabitants of Farrug were mostly farmers, though many were also employed on a cottage-industry basis in the thriving cotton industry of the time. Today they are for the most part wage labourers. Of the total male working population, 42 per cent are employed as semi-skilled and unskilled labourers, 39 per cent work as skilled fitters and as service personnel (shopkeepers, drivers, policemen, etc.) and 15 per cent as farmers. Only 4 per cent are professionals and white-collar workers. Three-fourths travel outside the village to their places of employment, chiefly with the Malta Government and the British military departments.

The occupational structure of Kortin is much the same. The higher proportion of skilled and clerical workers is in part a reflection of its past importance as an administrative centre, for until early in this century it was the seat of the district court. Seven per cent of the men work in professional and white-collar

[1] The figures for Farrug and Kortin are based on surveys I conducted, and the national figures on the *1957 Census: Report on Economic Activities*, pp. 45–55. The totals of the male working population in Farrug, Kortin and the Maltese Islands are 296, 1,131 and 73,930 respectively.

except in one case (Case IX).

241 234 512 264 [262] The evening meal is generally smaller than the lunch although consisting of much the same elements - a thick stew ('brodu' or 'minestra'), along with bread, cheese, fruit, olives, tomatoes, etc. The consumption of meat and fish is in part governed by religion and in part by price and availability, though meat certainly figures much more prominently in the rural diet than formerly. The meal is taken soon after the return from the fields, about 6.30 p.m. and is followed, an hour or so later by the saying of a family Rosary before retiring for the night about 8.0 p.m. In Gozo there is a tendency for people to rise, eat, work and retire to bed rather earlier than in the larger Island and the smaller villages are usually dark and quiet by 7 p.m.

241 234 512 Apart, therefore, from external factors, such as M.M.U. collection or Church service timings, the daily timetable of the farmer and the herdsman depends to a large degree on his own volition. He knows what work is outstanding and can decide how and when he will do it within the limits imposed by the season, demands of animals, and so on. Thus, at a peak period of field-work, such as harvest, the farmer and his assistants may work on until the late evening - even through the night. During exceptionally heavy rains, as in October 1957, work on anything approaching the normal scale is, on the other hand, impossible and the farmer's day becomes one of doing what he can and complaining copiously meanwhile.

241 512 461 Midgo (B/516, p.236), writing in 1840, was impressed by the regular and assiduous labour of the Maltese farmer, even during the heat of the summer sun. "Il semble impossible, au premier abord, que le paysan maltais puisse résister aux chaleurs intenses de l'été. Cependant, au milieu des champs, dès le lever du soleil, on le voit, exposés a ses brûlants rayons, continuer tout le jour ses pénibles travaux. Il fait deux pauses: la première a huit heures; il se repose alors une demi-heure pour déjeuner; la seconde à onze heures; c'est l'instant de son dîner frugal, après lequel il se repose de nouveau jusqu'à midi en hiver, et jusqu'à une heure en été, tantôt à l'ombre d'un figuier, tantôt au pied du petit mur qui entoure le champ, la tête couverte d'un bonnet de laine, et le reste du corps exposé au feux du jour. Il reprend ensuite ses travaux avec la même vigueur, et ne se retire qu'au signal donné par la cloche de son village, c'est à dire au coucher du soleil".

512 241 234 178 The essentials of the daily round of the farmer have changed little since Midge wrote except in so far as the tremendous increase in the importance of stock-rearing and

472 to be suffering from a mixture of inertia and pure inability
511 to organize the accounts of his business. In some cases he
[65] is compelled to put forward an outline statement for income
[157] tax assessment but generally his illiteracy and suspicion makes him unwilling to trust other individuals with details of his income and expenditure.

511 Within the family, however, this suspicion does not
454 normally exist. In fact the housewife tends to have full
[593] call on the contents of the "one purse" although in only a few cases was it found that she was making any detailed attempt at budgeting for the expenses of her home and family. As with the operation of the farm so with the home, the money is dispensed as demanded but all the time the instinct to save, observed by the 1911 Royal Commissioners (B/186), is there. The traditional peasant idea is
[178] that a large hoard of money or valuables will serve as an insurance when the expected depression arrives. Despite the opinion of the 1911 Commissioners, the notion that the saved capital would be better invested, possibly in capital equipment, is only now spreading to a considerable part of the farming community of the Islands.

511 In the day-to-day expenses of the traditional Maltese
437 village household, barter played a considerable part.
178 Today instances of it are rare and money is the fully accepted medium of exchange. As already indicated the Maltese farmer is not so far removed from his peasant past as may at first sight appear to be the case and one of the basic aims of his farming is still the provision of food
[433] for his family. The average farm in Malta, whatever its basis (stock, dairying or field produce), usually strives
[294] to produce as much of the food needs of the family as possible, though the provision of the family's clothing, as in the past when home-grown cotton was spun and woven to make clothes for the members of the grower's family, is no longer attempted.

262 Thus the food bought in by the farmer's wife includes
438 the 'new' items of diet which cannot be grown on the home farm: preserves, processed cheeses, spaghetti and farinaceous pasta, processed meats, tea, coffee, and evaporated milk (inordinately popular throughout the Islands).
[656] Flour rationing since the early part of the 1939-45 War has killed bread making as a home industry. Meat, except for
[433] rabbit, fowl and small birds, has to be purchased, as all slaughtering is Government-controlled. The farmer does aim to produce the basic vegetables - potatoes, beans, peas, pumpkins, melons, tomatoes, onions, garlic, artichokes, endives, celery, cucumber, carrots, and fruits - oranges, apples, lemons, figs, peaches, etc., required by the family.

262 369 In respect of diet an important distinction between town and country emerges. In the towns the diet is essentially 'Italian' with the full complement of spaghetti and other pasta dishes while 'English' food is now also readily available; but in the country districts there is notably less pasta and its place is taken by potatoes and other vegetables. The townsman who has in any case to buy all his food has accepted Italian ideas on diet with certain local, Maltese modifications, but the countryman, still able to produce much of his own food, clings to vegetables for the bulk constituents of his diet. Bread is however a staple of both town and country (v. Section 2).

272 273 262 511 A range of soft drinks, commercial wines, spirits (whiskey is very popular throughout Maltese society) are now standard elements in the diet, while luxury foods such as chocolate, biscuits and the wide range of sweet cakes ('qaq') are further examples of items which have now established themselves as needs and, consequently, as demands on the family purse.

178 291 Nowadays clothes (or at least the materials from which they are made) are bought by the housewife. This in itself has produced a minor revolution in rural economy. Traditionally the simple garments of cotton cloth were made at home or at least within the village and were worn by the field worker until they could be worn no more. Today a new range of clothing demands have appeared. The farmer now wants better clothes and footwear, but the greatest change is among the younger farming generation who want to dress like the youths of the towns. The retail sale of clothing in the rural districts has expanded rapidly, especially since the 1939-45 War years brought in the widespread use of military surplus material.

423 362 511. Housing is important in the present consideration because money is now being spent by the farmer both on buying his own house where he can but also on developing it and improving the furnishings.

[178] Having seen the comparatively well-appointed town dwellings he is not content with his poor country cottage.

178 511 There is also a wide range of incidental luxury or semi-luxury items which are being added to the list of 'needs'. Thus costs of travelling, entertainment and recreation all require money. Payments to the Church have now largely replaced the one-time gifts in kind, and taxes, paid by a few members of the farming community, can clearly only be met with cash.

451 511 [123] The first difficulty in investigating BUDGETS is the typical reticence to talk on matters financial. The second and more important draw-back is the aforementioned

175 288 the Royal Commissioners reported (B/184) that "The principl manufacture of the casals[28] is spinning with the spinning-wheel, or sometimes with the spindle. Second to this is the weaving of canvas, cotton and cloth used for clothing by the country people, and the necessary preparatory work, 175 178 288 such as winding, beating the cotton, etc." But the industry was then much weaker than it had been two generations before and as it retreated during the nineteenth century no ready replacement was forthcoming from [462] within agriculture itself. The farmer had to rely on other crops while, socially, the change affected the family as a working unit for cotton processing had been 175 178 288 735 511 largely the work of women. Even in 1839 a considerable amount of blame for the prevailing low living standards could be attached to the decline of cotton. The Commissioners reported that the prevalent poverty had become worse since 1814 on account of the shortage of work and that unemployment was worst of all in the rural districts, the cotton areas, where the small wages not only precluded saving but also led to begging and stealing which was "One of the worst consequences of the prevalent poverty and at the same time a most active cause of it" (B/184).

Poverty, wages, sanitation and disease gave rise to much concern and investigation in the middle decades of the nineteenth century - especially in so far as the conditions of the labouring and rural classes were concerned. The Royal Commissioners' report in 1838-9 (B/184); Midge in 1840 (B/516); the Census two years later and those made in 1851 and at ten-year intervals thereafter (B/166,167); reports on sanitary conditions in 1867 and 1874 (B/223,226); on distress in 1824 and 1867-68 (B/205,207); on mortality in 1874-75 (B/225, et seq); and on cholera in 1865 (B/224), all threw light on the poor living standards of the Maltese. However the 1874-75 report on mortality did hasten to qualify its observations with [262] "Poverty, indeed, at present, is not generally so great as it was in former times (about 40 years ago), when the bulk of the lower classes, especially in the country districts, lived constantly on barley bread of the worst description" while "It must also be admitted that the sanitary condition of these Islands, generally, is not so bad as that of other countries, and that, of late years, it has improved..." (B/225, p.7).

175 511 [369] [464] [458] The basic conclusion to emerge from this evidence is that there existed a considerable gulf in general living standards between the people of the towns and those of the country. There was also an important contrast within the most rapidly expanding urban area,

*159 46 work of the farm and animals himself", and he can only cope with his own farm and animals if he follows a heavy and rigidly organized schedule of work. Hired labour is not a proposition, Pawlu avers, at £1 for an eight-hour day and this has apparently contributed to the emphasis which he has put on fodder and milk production in recent years. [433] High costs of hired labour for field-work together with the poor and unguaranteed returns for crop produce make field work on dry (baghli) land a poor prospect. Irrigable land presents a different picture but there is none available in Pawlu's district.

*159 512 Pawlu's timetable (in effect he runs the farm single-handed) centres on the animals. During the summer months the pressure is slightly less because the weather is easier, field-work is less pressing and he has the casual help of the younger children in school vacations. Daily time of rising for Pawlu depends on where and when the milk has to be taken for collection. At one stage, in 1957, he had to be up soon after midnight but, until the new milk factory was opened at Xewkija in 1958, a more usual reveille was at 2 or 3 a.m.

[264] [262] Breakfast, of coffee and bread, is taken when the family gets up or when they return from the Church nearby. Pawlu often has to take meals when he can fit them in between his jobs so that it is somewhat exceptional to find the whole family sitting together for food. The morning milking takes him some two hours after which the animals need feeding and attention before he can go to the fields. About six times a month his morning takes him to Rabat on shopping or business errands.

[264] [262] Lunch, the main meal of the day, consists every day of either minestra (thick soup) or farinaceous paste of some kind, together with bread, cheese, oil (żejt) and home-made tomato 'kunserva'. Lunch is usually over by noon when milking and the preparation of the afternoon feed begins.

[264] The evening meal is normally similar to the lunch in content but less in amount. It is often taken immediately before retirement for the night which is early in the village. The farmer reckons to be in from the fields by sun-down but, when the evenings are longer, most of the village is quiet soon after 6 p.m. except where some conversation lingers in a paraffin-lit shop.

*159 512 794 Sundays and feasts days are breaks from the normal routine, but Church-going is not confined to these days and in fact accounts for some two half-hour visits every day with extra attendances at the weekend. In this very rural community the 'social' aspect of church-going retains most of its traditional importance. In the absence of

159 434 454 is not encouraged by this situation to invest his capital in any improvement for which no immediate return is apparent. Ġamri has, however, put a large amount of money into pigs and would seem to regard this as a better investment than putting his money into capital equipment for his fields. He has in [407] fact no mechanical equipment, although his brother has a rotary cultivator which Ġamri hires at a reduced rate of 16/- per tomna (instead of £1) for his own holding. No charge is made when the machine is used on the joint holding, in which case Ġamri contributes to the cost of fuel.

159 511 262 Expenses within the household are difficult to determine since so much of the food eaten by the family comes from the fields worked by Ġamri and his brother. This includes vegetables, fruit, salads, melons. Tomato paste (kunserva), a common element of diet throughout Malta, is home-made in this case. The two goats and two sheep supply the family with milk; though tinned milk is normally bought in for babies as required. Milk pasteurized by the M.M.U. is not bought. They occasionally buy in a little cheese, but most of this, and all eggs, are produced on the farm. Fish is caught from time to time by Ġamri himself, but some, such as tinned tuna, is bought. Poultry and rabbits for the family table are from the farm stock but some small birds, such as quail, are shot ('hunted') for roasting or stews. A home-made wine is supplemented with purchased soft drinks, notably the ubiquitous "Kinnie". Other items purchased include meat and ham, coffee, jams, biscuits and luxury confectionery (for special days such as first Communions, Confirmation, etc), olive oil and olives, together with the rationed goods (1958) -butter, bread, sugar and farinaceous paste (għaġin). Ġamri observes that the rationed (subsidized) supplies are usually insufficient for the family so additional quantities of these items have to be bought. In the case of bread, for example, these more costly off-the-ration purchases bring [354] the total weekly bill to some thirteen shillings. The sole means of cooking and heating is paraffin (petrolju), as throughout most of the rural areas of the Islands, and the family spends about 3s 6d weekly on this. Heating is not considered essential even during the coldest part of the winter when the family "close the door" (Ġamri).

159 262 [369] The diet of the family is essentially typical of rural Malta. In some details this differs from that found among urban working classes in the Islands but these differences are of emphasis rather than content. Thus the countryman tends to consume potatoes, the produce of his own farm, where the townsman relies for the bulk element of his diet [785] on paste, notably Italian spaghetti and macaroni. An important factor is religion and its fasting and other restrictions. Fasts are of three types (i) the Lenten Fast - "In the old

159 262 785 days people fasted full forty days" (Ġamri); (ii) the Friday Fast - it is forbidden to eat meat on Fridays and preferable to avoid it on Wednesdays also; and (iii) Special Fasts. These include the 'Change of Season' fasts and a variety of Saints' Days, special personal observances and certain occasional fasts designated by the Church authorities. The emphasis is on self-denial in all fasts. Meat, confectionary and 'extra' items are strictly avoided, and the quantity of permitted foods is also reduced. Nothing is eaten between the frugal meals.

159 262 264 The timing of meals throughout the day is variable in Ġamri's family. Rarely does he sit down to table with his wife and children, whose routine has to accommodate school time-tables, etc. On non-fast days breakfast consists of bread and coffee. Lunch is taken about noon - or an hour or so earlier on fast-days. If he is working in the fields Ġamri may have a loaf of bread, with oil, cheese, figs, olives, chickpeas and corn beef or some fish, or some cooked meal may be brought out to him by one of the women or girls. Sweet black coffee or home-made wine are the staple drinks, and the meal is normally followed by a siesta of at least one hour. The time of the evening meal depends on the nature and pressure of work in hand and consists of a stew (especially where the lunch had been a cold meal in the fields). [261] At all times food is used carefully. It is never wasted. Even produce of the farm such as eggs are "only given to the boys occasionally" (Ġamri).

198 291 443 [432] [244] The proportion of food purchased is now much greater than even a generation ago in this type of family. The same is true of <u>clothing</u>. Clothing has changed very considerably both in style and variety since Ġamri's father was a young farmer when half the people in the village had looms and many had spinning wheels to produce cotton garments for the family or other villagers. The old style of dress of the farmer consisted of knee-length, white cotton trousers, a thick woollen vest, waistcoat and cummerbund. The locally produced sheep's wool vest has been largely replaced by army surplus types of shirts. Garments of Maltese cotton and wool are now rarely seen except on the oldest men, who have been wearing them since they were much younger. The use of army surplus clothing has become very common since 1945 and the travelling drapers' vans, local shops and the Sunday markets (Valletta and Rabat) now do a considerable trade in both made up garments and materials of this type.

291 369 178 With the increasing contact between town and country the farmer has come to want smarter suits for his brief leisure hours. The younger generation of countryfolk no longer venture to the capital unless they are dressed like townsmen - suit, tie, shoes and so on. This increase in the

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6



796 times at different parts of the town; the best run, however, which is mostly enjoyed, both by the spectators and the carriers of the statue, is that which takes place at the lower end of Strada Reale on the hill opposite St. Catherine's Church and Convent.

Here large crowds of men are seen ready to help the bearers in the run with the heavy statue up the hill.

After traversing several other streets, the image is deposited in the same church from which it started.

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### *EASTER EGGS &c.*

The custom of eating and presenting *figolli* and round cheese cakes *(kassatat)* is as prevalent in Malta, at Easter, as it is in any other town or country of Italy.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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Maltese children look forward with great anxiety to get either from their parents, or from some friend or relative, a *figolla* at Easter. 796 262 431

The *figolla* consists of a bit of flat baked dough, cut in the shape of a woman, a turk, an eagle, a horse, a star, or a basket, with one or more eggs, having the shell stained red, or some other colour, embedded in its centre and fixed in position by cross bands of paste.

This characteristic rite of Paschal or Easter eggs is most widely diffused. 796 262

The universal connection of eggs with Eastertide does not seem to rest on any Christian symbolism. This popular observance is clearly of pagan origin. 171 174

In pagan imagery the egg was assigned to *Asturte*—the Phœnician Venus—as an emblem of the fructifying

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 262 171 174

forces of nature, and may thus have come to be associated with April, the month held sacred to *Aphroditis* (*), in or near which Easter falls.

We are told that the Jews used eggs in the feast of the Passover, and that when the Persians keep the festival of the Solar New Year (in March) they mutually present each other with coloured eggs. There can be little doubt, however, that the use of eggs at this season was originally symbolical of the revivification of nature, that is, the springing forth of life in spring.

A writer, in the "Gentlemen's Magazine" for July 1783, supposes the Easter egg to be an emblem of the Resurrection of our Lord—in the same manner, as the chicken entombed, as

(*) The Grecian name of Venus

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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it were, in the egg, in due time bursts its shell and springs forth to life.

Hutchinson (History of Northumberland) says: Eggs were held by the Egyptians as a sacred emblem of the renovation of mankind after the deluge.

The Jews adopted it to suit the circumstances of their History as a type of their departure from the land of Egypt, and it was used in the feast of Passover as a part of the furniture of the table with the Paschal Lamb.

The Christians have certainly used it on this day, containing as it does the elements of future life, as an emblem of the Resurrection. It seems that these eggs were decorated for a religious trophy after the days of lent, which are days of mortification and abstinence.

We know also that the Jews in ce-

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 lebrating their Passover, placed on the
262 table two unleavened cakes called "pass-
171 over cakes" (*) with hard boiled eggs
174 bound in with slips of paste cross ways on them (†)

Hyde, in his "Oriental Sports" says that the Christians buy eggs at Easter and stain them with a red colour, in memory of the blood of Christ shed for us at the time of the Crucifixion.

That the Roman Catholic Church has considered eggs as emblematical of the Resurrection may be gathered from the Ritual.

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### *St. GREGORY'S DAY*
### *General procession*

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793 This very popular feast, which takes place on the first Wednesday after

(*) The *figolla*.
(†) Brand's "Popular Antiquities."

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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Grace's carriage to the commonest donkey cart, keep moving through the merry crowds, in search of their occupants. 796 [493]

Most of the people, however, who take part in this general procession, either stop at Zeitun, or proceed to Marsascirocco — a watering place at some distance from that village—where they spend the remainder of the day in merry making.

Round cheese cakes, *kassatât*, is the most common edible connected with this day, and from early morning, the whole day long, the shrill cries uttered by the innumerable vendors of the cakes may be heard throughout the village. 796 262 265

A few remarks about the origin of this procession will be interesting. 796 174

Many and various are the opinions as regards that origin.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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Cathedral Church of Notabile on the eve of the said festival.

On the morning of the feast—as soon as the procession, which is led by the Bishop, enters the Cathedral Church—large crowds, especially of country people in their substantial holiday finery, and wearing their hoarded ornaments of massive gold, drive at a raping speed to Boschetto, where, careless of the excessive heat of a broiling sun, they divide into companies and under the shades of the leafy orange trees in the beautiful garden, they seem quite happy in eating their sumptuous dinners, consisting chiefly of stewed rabbit, ham, pies, cheese and an allowance of common wine, which they keep in large dark glass bottles, or in tin cans where the indispensable liquid is less liable to being spilt.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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## *SAINT MARTIN'S DAY*

527 One of the greatest family feast-days, among the Maltese, is that of St. Martin's, which is held on the 2nd and 3rd Sunday of November.

Happiness and true enjoyment reign supreme in every household on this [593] special day. Pater and materfamilias entertain at dinner their married sons and daughters, with their respective consorts and children, besides nephews, nieces, and others allied by ties of consanguinity.

Every body enjoys his share of sweetmeats on St. Martin's day, with a due allowance of Marsala or some other sort of good Sicilian wine.

527 Children look forward with pleasure
•262 to this day, being always regaled, by
857 either their parents or some other member of the family, with a small bag

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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crammed to the top with hazelnuts, chestnuts, figs, sweets and other edibles, besides a nice small roll studded with hazelnut-kernels and covered all over with sesame. 527 262 857

With these bags and rolls the happy children come out walking along the streets, proud of what they were lucky to get, then they meet in groups or parties and indulge in games for the nuts.

The most favourite game for children on this occasion is what they call "ta 'l castell" which means hitting at the castle. The castle consists of three nuts put near each other, topped by a fourth. They each arrange, say two or three of these castles in rows, and keep throwing by turns—every one wins the castle or castles he succeeds hitting and demolishing. 527 524 857

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527 No reason can be assigned for the
174 origin or meaning of keeping St. Martin's feast as a day of merriment among
[171] the Maltese. The usage is persisted in without any association or tradition to account for it, but the merry making in the neighbouring island of Sicily at this time of the year, when the new wine is made use of for the first time.

527 Wine drinkers are of opinion that
262 one can judge best of the flavour of
273 wine after eating some nuts first—this perhaps is the reason why nuts are made so much use of on this merry day.

194 Moresin refers the great doings on
527 this occasion to an ancient Athenian festival observed in honour of Bacchus, on the 11th, 12th, and 13th days of the month of *Anthesterion*, corresponding with our November.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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## *CHRISTMAS*

The Maltese are not at all wanting 796
in the religious fervour and the exhibition of hearty demonstrations of delight with which Christians welcome the anniversaries of the Nativity of our Blessed Redeemer.

This is made very apparent by the rich decorations and the illuminations which are to be seen in the churches on Christmas night.

Places of public resort and private residences are also richly decorated with floral emblems and devices on this occasion.

On the 24th December—Xmas eve— 796
most of the inhabitants, especially 574
young men, do not retire to bed at all 262
but ramble about, some parading the streets playing sweet melodies to charm the ears of the people, and others going

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 574 262 in companies to some one of their friends, at whose house they amuse themselves eating honey cakes and pancakes or fritters, and playing for nuts till the church bells ring a little before or after midnight.

At the conclusion of the service they come out again and devote the remainder of the night to amusements.

796 534 [184] The approaching festival of Christmas is heralded in some of the villages of Malta by the appearance of the "zakk" and "tambur" players in the streets. (*)

[237] The *zakk* or bagpipe is a wind instrument—one of the primitive instruments of sylvan music—formed of an inflated dog skin, which is held by the player under his left arm, with the legs

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[541] (*) The *Zakk* and tambourine are also in use amongst our lower classes on the days of Carnival.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 174 824 unquestionably derived from the like practice of our Pagan ancestors.

"Trimming of Temples," says Polydore Virgil "with hangings, flowers, boughs, and garlands was taken from the heathen people, who decked their idols and houses with such array.

796 174 373 "Christmas," says Blount, "was called the feast of lights in the Western or Latin Church, from the many lights or candles that were lit at the feast, and this because Christ, the light of all lights, that true light, then came into the world. Hence the prevalent custom to have so many lights in our churches at Christmas midnight service.

796 174 262 The custom of eating pancakes or fritters and honey cakes at Christmas in Malta is supposed to owe its origin to the cakes baked in honour of *Janus*, who presided over the beginning of the New Year.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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585 The bridal procession then proceeded to the Church for the ceremony, attended by musicians playing on different instruments, and singers who sang stanzas in praise of the young couple. These musicians were proceeded by three men: the first bearing on his head a basin of white earth on which was placed a big cake with two figures, representing the bridegroom and the bride—the man who carried this basin wore also a scarf with a round cake hanging from it. The second [262] [431] carried a basket filled with sugar plums and candied nuts, which one of the relations distributed among such acquaintances he happened to meet. In the middle of the basket was a handkerchief folded in the form of a pyramid, and ornamented with the images of the B. Virgin, St. Joseph, and the

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6



764 their faces and black silk cloaks. (*)
767
[292] The room being stripped of all its furniture and hung with black cloth.

[302] The *neuuieha*, throwing themselves on their knees at the foot of the coffin, began singing the praises of the dead, and cut off handfuls of their hair which
[262] they spread over the coffin. On the same
[431] day, cakes and boiled wheat were distributed among all the relations, and the hair was cut off the tails of every horse at the stables belonging to the house of the deceased.

764 The funeral procession was always
533 composed of the relations in mourning preceded by some boys playing the fifes or trumpets.

[765] (*) The colours of the dress or habit. worn to signify
[822] grief are different in different countries. In Europe,
[171] the ordinary colour for mourning is black. *Black*, being the privation of light, is supposed to denote the privation of life.

PULLEYN *Origin & Inventions.*

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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## NEW YEAR'S SUPERSTITIONS

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A superstitious dread still attaches to some one of the family keeping absent at dinner time on New Year's day. He who doesn't dine with his family on New Year's day is expected to die at the end of that same year.

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He who eats hotch-potch soup on New year's day is to gnaw the ham bones all the rest of the year.

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Those who eat cabbages on New year's day groan for a whole year.

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## OIL, SALT AND WINE

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The spilling of oil is considered a very unlucky omen by the Maltese. The spilling of salt or wine, however, betokens good luck.

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8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6



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[262]

THE SWEETHEART'S BARGAIN

In the marriage contract, they have it for a pact,
That he takes her to the Feste and sets her on a wall.
That he buys her cakes of sweetmeat, of the sort with hempseed made.
For that's the kind of sweetmeat a bride likes best of all.

It is believed that such a clause used actually to be embodied in the written contract drawn up by the parents and the go-between.

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[184]

Each little hamlet has its own feast, in honour of its own particular patron. Each has its own peculiar forms. Of the national feasts that of St. John naturally occupies a place of considerable importance. Certain aspects of its celebration, however, indicate that the Order of St. John was not alone responsible for the enthusiasm which this saint inspires. Busuttil, who has already been quoted at some length, writes of the Feast of St. John as follows:

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"Not unlike other nations, the Maltese are not indifferent in celebrating the Nativity of St. John by kindling great fires in the public streets, and giving their children dolls to carry in their arms on this day, in order to make good the prophecy respecting the Baptist 'Multi in nativitate ejus gaudebunt.'

Days and even weeks before this festival groups of children are seen going out into the country fields to gather straw, twigs, and all sorts of other combustibles which they store up for St. John's Eve.

On the night of June 23rd, the day before the festival of the Saint, great fires are kindled in the streets, squares, and market places of the towns and villages of the Island, and as fire after fire blazes out of the darkness of that summer night, the effect is singularly striking.

These fires are sometimes kept up for hours, being

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
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The fratelli
763 —lay brethren of the congregation—hurry from their homes
794 to take their places in the procession of the Viatecum. Marching rapidly, like a company of soldiers, headed by a peasant ringing a staccato, commanding bell, some bearing tapers, some censers, all chanting the prayers for the dying, they pass
[793] quickly through the village street. Under a canopy, borne by two sturdy *fratelli*, goes the priest in his bright vestments, bearing God to the dying man.

The women hurry to place a light in their windows, kneel and pray as God passes.

So, with such poor pomp as these simple folk can muster,
764 the Prince of Peace comes to dying Zeppu. The funeral rites
[171] and customs differ hardly at all nowadays from those of other Catholic countries. But Zeppu's grandfather could remember a time when the Old Things were much in evidence.

764 There were the "Wailing Women" (whose name *neuuieha*
767 survives in the sense of "one who constantly complains"). They wore long black robes, and chanted death-songs whose burden was a combination of praise for the deceased's virtues and rebuke for his having left them. They cut the vines from the courtyard, overturned the furniture, broke pottery, and mixed the fragments with soot and ashes, staining the doors
[302] of the bereaved house with the mixture. They cut pieces of their hair and scattered them over the coffin.

765 If the dead man possessed horses, cows, goats, all their tails
•[262] had pieces cut from them in token of mourning. There was a
[764] form of "wake" where funeral cakes and boiled wheat were eaten. A carpet was spread over the tomb to prevent the unware from treading on it.

[372] No fire was lit in the house for three days after the funeral.
[302] The women kept to the house for forty days. The men, having remained indoors for seven days, went unshaven.

764 Here are clear signs of the most primitive funeral rites
174 and *taboos*. Death was a pollution—hence the segregation of

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6



ears, a share of their own cosmopolitan culture, of their own standards of civilized life and manners.

They also, it would appear, taught the Maltese how to cook if the origin of some of the more savoury Maltese dishes—*imbuljuta* and *zalzett*, *pastizzi* and *kusksu*, has been correctly ascribed to the kitchens of the Grand Masters' palaces and Auberges of the Knights. One island speciality has even made its way into the *haute cuisine* of Europe as the perfect accompaniment of boiled turbot and similar fish. It is *Sauce Maltaise*—a *Hollandaise* encarnadined and additionally flavoured with the juice and finely shredded peel of the blood-orange, which can be of a deeper red in Malta than anywhere else in the world.

*Arms of the Order of S. John*

[pp. 111–119 of Text have not been processed. Plates facing p. 112, and 113 have been processed].